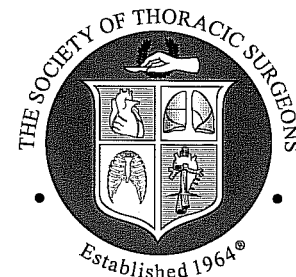


THE SOCIETY OF THORACIC SURGEONS

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March 20, 2006

Edwin C. Lopez
President
Association of Physician Assistants in Cardiovascular Surgery
P.O. Box 4834
Englewood, CO 80155

Dear Mr. Lopez:

I am pleased to inform you that the Executive Committee of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) agreed at our meeting on January 28, 2006 to endorse both your documents presented to it by your organization, "Endorsement of Postgraduate Cardiothoracic Physician Assistant Training" and "Endorsement of Fellow Status of the Association of Physician Assistants in Cardiovascular Surgery." We believe it is imperative that highly trained physician assistants are available to support the complex work cardiothoracic surgeons do.

I look forward to a continuing collaborative relationship between the STS and the APACVS.

Sincerely,

Frederick L. Grover, MD
President

Cc: Carol Goddard
Robert A. Wynbrandt
Damon K. Marquis

Endorsement of Postgraduate Cardiothoracic Physician Assistant Training

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) supports the following with regard to postgraduate Physician Assistant (PA) education and training in cardiothoracic surgery:

1. standardized core curriculum
2. standardized core competencies
3. use of the term “PA resident” for certified and licensed PAs who are matriculating in structured postgraduate PA training programs (“residencies”)
4. development of an accreditation process for postgraduate PA residency programs

Recognizing the limited number of structured postgraduate PA programs currently available and that availability of resources limits the immediate addition of multiple new programs, the STS supports use of the interactive on-line lecture series developed by the St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Cardiothoracic PA Residency Program. The on-line nature of this lecture series allows participants access to a structured didactic while completing the clinical aspects of their residency at remote sites. While this specific program has been identified (through STS and Association of PAs in Cardiovascular Surgery consensus) to be a model for postgraduate cardiothoracic PA instruction, it is not intended to exclude other didactic programs meeting similar content criteria.

There is at present no consensus on the number of times a clinician should perform a particular procedure with direct supervision before competency can be established. Because inherent technical and cognitive abilities of individuals vary, the number of times a specific procedure must be performed to achieve competence will also vary. Previous medical and surgical experience plays an important role in the assimilation of skills, as does an individual’s transferable skills based on such previous experience. The STS supports logging of clinical opportunities of individual PA residents to ensure adequacy of these opportunities. The supervising cardiothoracic surgeon is responsible for determining the skill level of the physician assistant to ensure that all clinical duties are performed safely and competently.

The STS supports ongoing evaluation of the postgraduate PA residency concept with assigned periodic review by the STS/APACVS Task Force to ensure accuracy and relevance. This will include evaluation of the adequate quantity of clinical opportunities provided at remote training sites. In the absence of standardized core competency opportunities available at a given resident training site due to regulatory barriers or case volumes, other avenues for acquiring this experience may be substituted (e.g., technical skills workshops such as the certificate of completion courses conducted by the APACVS). The STS recognizes that the dependent nature of Physician Assistant practice serves as an ongoing mechanism for determination of proficiency and optimization of patient safety, which remains at the forefront of all goals associated with this process.

January 27, 2006

**Endorsement of Fellow Status of the
Association of Physician Assistants in Cardiovascular Surgery**

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons supports establishment and recognition of the “Fellow” category of the Association of Physician Assistants in Cardiovascular Surgery as defined in the APACVS Bylaws. The designation of “Fellow” status recognizes either completion of a formal postgraduate PA residency program or documented achievement of advanced experience in the field of cardiothoracic surgery.